

variety of roles, particularly Lemon's embittered father. ("His teeth were rotten, his shit was rotten, and of course he stank.") But most of the other characters are reduced to sponges absorbing Dan's venomous opinions, and Linda Hunt, burdened with discharging these, is too mannered and monotonous to sugar the poison with the necessary charismatic charm.

It's puzzling that this play is set in England, since Dan (despite Miss Hunt's elegant cadences) is supposed to be American, Lemon is half-American, and the political issues are native. But then *Aunt Dan and Lemon* strikes me as an entirely puzzling performance by a valuable writer trying to create a play of ideas, but too confused by internal contradictions to compose a coherent work.

As Elaine Scarry points out in her brilliant and difficult book, no one actually feels the pain of another. We live in certainty about our pain, in doubt about the reality of another's. There is nothing natural about empathy: it is a rope bridge of language suspended across the abyss that separates us from the skins of others. Cut the bridge of language, and men will stare out across the abyss at each other, as if they were gazing on racks of meat. Scarry's compassionate linguistics documents how that bridge between torturer and victim is cut. The torturer's role comes complete with the anesthetizing slang of a sub-profession. The Argentinean torturers call what they do "the dance"; in the Philippines it is called "the birthday party"; in Greece, the "tea party." These are the jokes that strip the thing itself of any incriminating significance. The victims' suffering also conspires to assist the torturer: the more inhuman the screaming and the more bestial the torment, the less human—the less incriminating—the victim can seem. Torture makes torturers: the role and the act disconnect the meanings that might otherwise implicate torturers in the fate of their victims.

Torture works, torture pleases, torture exploits our natural incapacity to feel the pain of others. There ought to be no mystery about torture's role in propping up more than half the states of the globe.

YET there is a mystery. Torture has become a scandal. We think of it now as a sign pointing to the darkest places in human nature, a symptom of a century's guilt about its own history. Yet this is puzzling. Despite loose talk about an epidemic of torture in the 1970s, it is not clear that the incidence of torture has dramatically increased. There may be more states than there were in the colonial period, more regimes dependent on the jail, the cattle prod, and the torturer's needle, but this need not mean that there are more victims. What *has* changed is the moral visibility of torture. Thanks to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and to Amnesty International, the cantonment of responsibilities at the borders of one's nation, one's race, class, or religion, has broken down. The moral internationalism built on the shame at the Gentile pharisaism that attended the destruction of European Jewry now insists that what happens in the jails of Kampala,

THE TRUTH ABOUT TORTURE

Torture

by Edward Peters

(Basil Blackwell, 210 pp., \$24.95, \$9.95 paper)

The Spectacle of Suffering

by Pieter Spierenburg

(Cambridge University Press, 274 pp., \$39.50)

The Body in Pain:

The Making and Unmaking of the World

by Elaine Scarry

(Oxford University Press, 385 pp., \$24.95)

Victor Hugo thought torture had been abolished forever. We know better. It has returned. Not just in the obvious places—Guatemala, Uganda, El Salvador, Chile, Iran, Syria, Cambodia. Not just in authoritarian regimes, with juntas hanging on to power against insurgents and economic crisis, but close to home, as close as a New York City police precinct.

How is one to understand torture? Some would say there's nothing much to understand. Torture works, hence it exists. Scarcely a handful of modern states repose on the consent of the governed; the rest rely on the water cannon, the bayonet, and the interrogation cell. Dictators have found torture an efficient substitute for the unpredictable rituals of consent; democracies have turned to torture—the French in Algeria, the British in Northern Ireland—when consent has crumbled. There is no mystery—no abyss of human nature that needs to be plumbed—about why this is so: torture is power's answer to the collapse of legitimacy.

As for the motives of torturers, these

need not be mysterious either. There is never any shortage of recruits for the torture squads. It is a dirty job but the pay is good, and there is security. Torture does not call for sadism, only for the normal human capacity for splitting in two—of not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. As a job it has both squalid pleasures and some exalted ones too, like playing God.

Torturers' motives would only be a moral puzzle if we supposed humans to possess a natural empathy for the suffering of others. But why should we assume any such thing? We have little natural empathy for each other in the abstract. We value our differences as individuals more than our similarities as a species: the common fate of the body is more a matter of shame than of pride. Each fault line of difference—race, religion, class, and gender—can be widened by the lies and fantasies of propaganda into an abyss across which screams cease to signify. Torturers need not be monsters to be deaf to these screams.

Johannesburg, and Moscow is as much our business as what happens in the jails of New York or Louisiana.

This in itself is a new moment in the history of conscience. How we have got to this point—why we can no longer stand the dirty business wherever it occurs—is what Edward Peters's concise and thoughtful book sets out to explain.

TORTURE chambers are intensely moral places: torturers have to find some value higher than human life in the name of which they allow themselves to exercise their particular talents. A good Catholic inquisitor would have been scandalized by the common sense of late 20th-century liberal humanism—that there is no sin greater than deliberate cruelty inflicted on another human being. Such a scruple was blasphemous: it valued human life more highly than obedience to God's will, and to the inquisitor God's will was clear. Was it not written: Compel them to enter? And what compulsion is more persuasive than pain?

As Peters points out, torture was not a puzzle for Aristotle, Cicero, or Marcus Aurelius. Torture supposes some theory of language that establishes whose word can be trusted. Greek and Roman law distinguished between the testimony of men of honor, whose word was their bond, and slaves and *humiliores*—men of base social standing—who could not be trusted to tell the truth unless submitted to the queen of torments.

Systems of torture, Peters further points out, also imply a tacit anthropology. The inquisition divided the human race into believers and heretics, an anthropology of amnesia toward the Gospel message of the equality of all human creatures. The early state courts divided the world into honorable men whose word could be believed, and hardened criminals who could be counted on to tell the truth only under extreme duress. In these courts of the postmedieval state, torture was held to be the only sure way of eliciting the queen of proofs, the personal confession required for conviction in all capital cases. If torture did not spread north into Scandinavia and Britain, it was because northern Europe held onto the older adversarial system in which conflicting claims of prosecution and defense were assessed by a jury. In the adversarial system, confession was not required for conviction in capital cases. Looser evidential standards dispensed

with the need for the queen of torments. She made her entry into British jurisprudence only in treasonous conspiracies against the king.

In *Torture and the Law of Proof*, John Langbein argued that it is a sentimental fairy tale to suppose that torture was abolished in Europe because of the moral outcries of the Enlightenment. Voltaire and Montesquieu simply echoed voices already raised against the practice for two centuries. The decisive change was in procedure: the continental system ceased to depend on the queen of proofs—confession—and hence decreased its resort to the queen of torments. The rise of imprisonment as an alternative to execution enabled judges to convict on lesser charges in cases where proof was not certain, instead of relying on torture to secure confession.

PIETER Spierenburg is less dogmatically insistent on proving that institutions matter more than mentalities. Yet he too sharpens up the fuzzy notion that torture was swept away by a wave of European sentimentality. His careful study of the rise and fall of public punishment in Amsterdam between 1600 and 1800 is anchored in Norbert Elias's theory of the civilization process. Gibbeting, public flogging, execution, and torture all came to share the mysterious opprobrium of progress. They came to be seen as barbarous vestiges of an age when the state had just seized the monopoly of judicial violence from the private army and the blood feud. Popular dislike of the torturer and the executioner in the early modern period, Spierenburg argues, was not directed at their cruelty, but at their mercenary office: for money they inflicted cruelty on the state's behalf. Only as the state's monopoly on the use of legitimate violence came to be accepted did the contempt for the mercenary character of the office decline; but as it did, opprobrium shifted to the cruelty of the ritual.

The physicality of torture and execution, which seems savage and irrational to minds used to the modern impersonal state, must be understood (as Foucault argued) according to a different symbolism of power—as an angry sovereign's chastisement of his disobedient subjects. The very figures who raised the first protests against torture—Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke, Montaigne—were at the same time

Chess: East-West and the Battle of Ideas

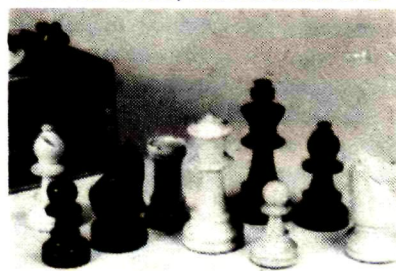
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rethinking state power not as the personalized embodiment of the sovereign's will but as a public trust, anchored in social consent rather than in fear and awe at the violence of the Father.

The new European state raised on these philosophical foundations was a Leviathan compared to the weak early modern regimes, which had depended on torture and public execution. The end of the era of torture coincided with the emergence of the modern police and prison services. Hence the paradox: torture belongs to the era of weak states. The greatest concentration of undemocratic police power ever seen in 19th-century Western Europe—Fouché's Napoleonic police—was not underpinned by torture. Torture survived, as Malise Ruthven has shown, only in the weak, archaic Neapolitan and papal states of mid-century Italy.

AT the same time that torture lost its place in the new legitimization of state power, the old anthropology that justified the infliction of torture on slaves, the unfree, the infamous, and the humble began to break down. Torture became a scandal at the same time that slavery, the neglect of prisoners, and the legal inequality of women and blacks became social facts that the rich and powerful had to understand as an indictment of themselves, rather than some distant disturbance in another moral galaxy.

This new consciousness—this identification with those in pain—was quite consistent with the redoubling of social distance between rich and poor. Indeed, as P. N. Furbank has suggested, it was not in spite of, but because of their admission of their essential identity with the poor that the European bourgeoisie set about their furious search for barriers of social exclusion. Class was an invention that reconciled the privileges and pleasures of status exclusion with the truth of moral and legal equality—which is one reason why the chasm of class did not serve, as the chasm of race often did on the peripheries of empire, to legitimize the use of torture.

The new mental universe, which accepted the juridical equality of all human subjects, was sustained in turn by a moral cosmopolitanism built on the ideology of free trade, the march of the mind, and the universal spread of progress and civilization. Gladstone's

campaign against Neapolitan torture was only one crusade in a career of Christian moral internationalism that took up the cause of the Armenians and Bulgarians suffering under the Turkish yoke. The abolition of torture in the peripheries of the empire marched in the vanguard of this now-vanished bourgeois internationalism.

Inspired by this internationalist spirit, Hugo proclaimed the end of torture—just as it made its reappearance. As Peters shows, torture was a humble camp follower in the Great Powers' gadarene rush toward the abyss of the First World War. The old liberal cosmopolitanism evaporated in the heat of the imperial competition. Borders that were once open came to require passports. The state secret returned, and with it the state police—the Okhranka, the Deuxième Bureau, Scotland Yard. The state police built a new labyrinth of prisons and in these recesses the torture cell reemerged, at first for spies, then for terrorists.

Imperial rivalry in the decades before the First War nourished and exploited conspiracy, the secret, and the spy. The modern state engendered a new paranoia toward the "enemy without," that fantasy of encirclement and vulnerability, which legitimized its ever more frantic acquisition of police powers. The totalitarian states of the 20th century built their torture apparatus on the archipelago of institutions of surveillance and control bequeathed them by the imperial states of the 19th. The Cheka inherited the Okhranka's cells, whips, and files. The unsated land hungers and ethnic hatreds left over from 19th-century imperial quarrels were taken up and legitimated anew by communism and Nazism, and these religions in turn engendered a new anthropology of the class enemy—the Jew, the gypsy, and the kulak—who could be tortured and exterminated for the sake, once again, of some value higher than humble human life.

MOST of us like to think we have awakened from this history as from a nightmare. Yet it is a kind of condescension to consign torture to a now-vanished age of religious superstition, to believe that it has no place—except in the heart of a few sadists—in a tolerant liberal culture. Liberal cultures can be blind to their own fashions in fanaticism. Consider the feeling after the Beirut hijacking and hostage drama.

Nothing arouses stronger feelings than terrorism, and nothing offers a more potent justification for torture. It requires little imagination to suppose what would have happened if some Shiite gunman possessed of information about the hostages' whereabouts had fallen into the hands of a CIA operative in Beirut. The line between legitimate coercion of a suspect and torture is razor thin, and never more easily crossed than when the suspect holds alien and unpleasant beliefs, and a whole country is baying for vengeance.

If torture works, and terrorism provides moral justification on the cheap, what kind of argument can possibly prevail against its use in a case like the Beirut hijacking? The argument that torture violates a natural human inviolability is noble, but it is unconvincing when applied to terrorists whose own view about human inviolability was made manifest when they dumped the young Marine's body onto the tarmac of Beirut Airport. In such a situation, no arguments about restraint are likely to carry much conviction.

YET IT is worth observing that torture is unlikely to have much purchase on anyone who believes his pain is the price of a martyr's immortality. Even when torture works on humbler victims, it silences the flow of information that would be available to the authorities if they could count on the support of their people. A regime that depends on torture for its information comes to depend on it exclusively. In Algeria, once the police and army began to stink with the infamy of torture, it became ever more infamous for Arabs to associate with the French. If more Israeli officers succumb to their feelings in dealing with Palestinian terrorists, the West Bank will become ungovernable.

Torture works, but only in the short term. In the regimes where torture has been the mainstay—Argentina, Greece, Turkey, Chile—terrorism provided the covering permission. Where terrorism did not exist, it was invented. Yet these regimes were like card houses poised on a torturer's needle: one by one they fell apart. It is not fanciful to suppose that even General Pinochet's days are numbered.

In Argentina, when the death squads in the Ford Falcons were making their dawn raids, the boys and girls on the beach used to say to reporters, "There is no politics in Argentina." If torture ends

politics, so of course does terrorism. Their object is the same: to strike against the trust between strangers that sustains the public realm, the political world. In the long term, even nondemocratic societies cannot function without politics, without some uncoerced debate and circulation of information. Torture clots and blocks the very flow of information it seeks, and destroys the civil society on which political stability reposes.

Torture also plays into the hands of terror. Terrorism's tactic is to provoke torture, to delegitimize societies by forcing them to descend to the same calcu-

lus as the terrorists. Terrorism is a language that seeks to force its brother—torture—to speak; torture is a linguistics of pain designed to force terror to confess. This dialogue is the death of reason and politics. The test of a nation's will to defend itself is not the license it gives to its antiterrorist squads, but its capacity to restrain its indignation for the sake of its own liberty.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

Michael Ignatieff is the author of *The Needs of Strangers* (Viking).

KEEPING UP WITH JONES

Into Eternity: The Life of James Jones, American Writer
by Frank MacShane

(Houghton Mifflin, 355 pp., \$18.95)

The people on the Île St. Louis still remember James Jones as a man who looked like a commando, but upon acquaintance revealed an extraordinary sweetness. His appearance suited the French preconception of how an American writer should look—an inspired savage, usually drunk—whereas his real gentleness disarmed them utterly. When I mentioned to the people who run the Brasserie St. Louis that I brought them greetings from my former writing student, Jones's daughter Kaylie, they went into raptures over the great man who'd used their restaurant as his living room; they even had to summon their daughter and her new baby from some inner recess to meet the man who'd known *les Jones*.

In fact I'd never known James Jones, although his daughter did once bring her mother, Gloria, to an end-of-the-semester party I gave for my Columbia fiction workshop. When I politely asked Mrs. Jones (who once worked as a stand-in for Marilyn Monroe) what she was doing for Doubleday, she replied, "I fuck writers." She then asked me why I was gay and wanted to know if I was afraid of women, had I ever tried one, did I think there were teeth down there. . . . I suddenly felt terribly prissy and *dépassé*, not at all the sort of writer James Jones, in his frank, searching way, would have liked.

Gloria was the great love of Jones's life—she and his writing. Once, when he thought he might die, Jones left a note for Gloria: "I've always loved you an awful lot. More than I've ever loved anything or anybody. Maybe my own work I've loved as much." The letter is pure Jones in its sincerity, its sacrifice of eloquence to the graceless truth, its egotism, and its generosity.

Despite his macho exterior, Jones had none of Hemingway's alternating sadism and self-hatred. He liked to help other writers and was extremely friendly with, among others, Irwin Shaw, Peter Matthiessen, Norman Mailer, James Baldwin, Willie Morris, William Styron, and Mary McCarthy. Jones would have been incapable of displaying the malice Hemingway evinced when Scribner's asked him for a comment on *From Here to Eternity*. Hemingway said of Jones:

Things will catch up with him and he will probably commit suicide. . . . To me he is an enormously skillful fuck-up and his book will do great damage to our country. . . . I hope he kills himself as soon as it does not damage your or his sales. If you give him a literary tea you might ask him to drain a bucket of snot and then suck the puss out of a dead nigger's ear.

So much for the literary life.

Unlike Hemingway, Jones was concerned with analyzing the relations be-



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